

Miami Herald

H1*

IMMIGRATION

Diaz-Balart was there, won't say whether Trump disparaged Haiti

BY ALEX DAUGHERTY
AND DAVID SMILEY
adaugherty@mclatchydc.com

WASHINGTON
There were only seven lawmakers in the room when President Donald Trump reportedly referred to Haiti,

El Salvador and African nations as "shithole countries." Miami Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart was one of them. Did the Miami Republican hear the words himself? Did he challenge the president's comment? He refuses to say, even after the lone Democrat in the room said Friday that Trump had "said hateful things, and

he said them repeatedly." In a statement, Diaz-Balart merely confirmed that he was at the White House meeting on Thursday, but he did not back up Trump's Twitter denial of the "shithole" comment or the claim made by Sen.

SEE IMMIGRATION, 3A

➔ MORE INSIDE
● On quake anniversary, Miami Haitians speak out, **3A**
● Fabiola Santiago: Insulted countries are what help make Miami great, **3A**
● African countries and Haiti react to vulgar remarks, **12A**



NATION

DEADLINE ON IRAN NUKE DEAL

The president gave European allies 120 days to agree to an overhaul of the Iran nuclear deal or the U.S. will pull out. **12A**



BUSINESS

FLA. HOUSE MOVES TO PROBE TV DEAL

A TV executive is ordered to surrender documents about a \$2.8 million tourism ad campaign for Visit Florida. **14A**

LOCAL & STATE

CORCORAN ON SANCTUARY CITIES

Florida Speaker is using the Legislature as a bully pulpit to court conservative voters and restrict powers of cities and counties. **4A**

TRANSPORTATION

Downtown to downtown in 33 minutes — with plush seats, Wi-Fi and drinks

BY MARTIN VASSOLO
mvassolo@miamiherald.com

When the first paying customers of South Florida's new express commuter rail service board Saturday, they'll find sumptuous leather seats fitted with power outlets, free Wi-Fi fast enough for a Netflix stream, iced Starbucks (\$4) — and bathrooms you can operate with the wave of your hand.

Government officials and media got a preview Friday as Brightline, the privately funded train line, finally made its first public run between downtown Fort Lauderdale and downtown West Palm Beach, a nonstop ride that took 33 minutes.

When regular service begins Saturday, South Floridians will hop aboard for \$10 or \$15 a pop.

SEE BRIGHTLINE, 2A



EMILY MICHOT emichot@miamiherald.com

Brightline debuts its intercity railway connecting Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach on Friday. The company aims to get cars off the road, with plans to extend to Miami this year and Orlando afterward.

GAMBLING

Fontainebleau owner Soffer buying Mardi Gras casino in Hallandale Beach

BY RENE RODRIGUEZ, DOUGLAS HANKS AND MARY ELLEN KLAS
rrodriguez@miamiherald.com

Real-estate mogul Jeffrey Soffer is in talks to purchase the Mardi Gras Casino and Race Track in Hallandale Beach, adding the gambling destination to a family portfolio that includes the nearby Aventura Mall and Miami Beach's Fontainebleau Resort.

The Soffers have wanted to bring a casino to the Fontai-

■ Jeff Soffer said he has no plans to transfer the gambling license for the Mardi Gras Casino to the Fontainebleau in Miami Beach.

nebleau as part of a statewide tussle on Florida's gambling laws, and acquiring the Mardi Gras Casino would give the Aventura-based family a piece of the state's gaming industry. It also raises the possibility

SEE CASINO, 2A



Turnberry CEO Jeff Soffer said a new firm would handle the casino.

THE AMERICAS

Hungry Venezuelans rely on work-for-food barter as the economy spirals

BY GUSTAVO OCANDO ALEX
Special to the Miami Herald

MARACAIBO, VENEZUELA

Leonard Altamar, a 41-year-old plumber, carries his tool box — and a kilo of imported pasta — as he walks into a high-end restaurant at a luxury mall in Maracaibo in western Venezuela.

The father of two won't need the packaged food to fix the leak in one of the business's flooded restrooms, but he wouldn't leave the bag of pasta unprotected on his bike. It is a treasure he

■ Hungry Venezuelans are bartering work for food in the country's economic crisis as prices spike and food becomes harder for professionals and other workers to afford.

just earned. "I just repaired a dishwasher and got paid with this spaghetti, a little bit of beef and 200,000 bolívares (or about \$1.20). I began to accept this kind of payment in September. Doing this, at least my family can eat a little," Altamar said.

SEE VENEZUELA, 2A

CUSTOMER SERVICE

To subscribe or report delivery issues,
800-843-4372 or miamiherald.com/customer-service

Americas
Business
Comics

17A
14-16A
8C

Deaths
Lottery
Local news

18-19A
12A
3-9A

Puzzles
Real Estate
Television

2C, 9C
1-4H
7C

0 77785 23333 16

SCANDESIGN

ANNUAL SALE

12 MONTHS NO INTEREST

*SEE STORE FOR DETAILS



GOING ON NOW!

SALE ENDS SUNDAY, JANUARY 14

HOLLYWOOD • 4150 N 28TH TER • 954.874.3888
N MIAMI BEACH • 3025 NE 163RD ST • 305.944.8080
BOCA RATON • 7750 N FEDERAL HWY • 561.990.2521